



Proficient | Exemplar Essay

Expect the Unexpected

The Haunted House



Plot and Ideas

The storyline establishes a plausible context and is built on an exposition that supports the plot (“It all started one Friday at school when my friend Ella asked me if I wanted to go to the haunted house this week”). The writer incorporates sufficient description that builds toward a climax and resolution (“Ultimately, I faced my fear and unexpectedly followed through with the haunted house”).



Development and Elaboration

The narrative establishes a clear setting (“All night I thought about the haunted house and how I would be so scared”), while also introducing and developing characters that advance the story and reveal the central idea. There is sufficient dialogue throughout that is mostly effective in enhancing the storyline (“Ella responded ‘c’mon Keri, you know you are not busy. Scared maybe, but not busy.’”).



Organization and Sequencing

A sequence of events is established to show a definite beginning, middle, and end. Pacing is well-utilized and mostly supports the development of the story. The narrative uses transitions and other techniques to signal shifts in time (“all night” and “the next morning”) and setting, and the resolution offers closure to the course of events (“Ultimately, I faced my fear”).



Language and Style

The narrative uses descriptive words, sensory language, and figurative language to create imagery and convey setting and characters (“my palms were sweaty and my face was getting all red”). The writing is engaging in a way that builds the voices of the characters and the narrator (“The next morning, I woke up and tried to think of some lame excuse to tell Ella”).



Using Exemplars in Your Lessons

Exemplar essays are tools to take abstract descriptions and make them more concrete for students. One way to use them is to print the clean copies of the essays and allow students to use the rubric to make notes or even find examples of important elements of an essay - thesis statements, introductions, evidence, conclusions, transitions, etc. Teachers can also use exemplars to illustrate what each score point within a trait ‘looks like’ in an authentic student essay. For additional ideas, please see “25 Ways to Use Exemplar Essays” by visiting the Curriculum Resources page in Help.

Expect the Unexpected



The Haunted House

Once I had an unexpected moment that I never thought would happen. It all started one Friday at school when my friend Ella asked me if I wanted to go to the haunted house this week. I nervously looked at her and said "no, I think I am busy."

Ella responded "c'mon Keri, you know you are not busy. Scared maybe, but not busy." She was right. I was scared of clowns, and I was embarrassed because everyone thought I was too old to be this way. I knew that haunted house would have some creepy clown waiting to jump out at me. "So are you coming or not?" she asked. "Yeah I'll be there," I said.

All night I thought about the haunted house and how I would be so scared. I didn't want my friends to see me this way, but I knew they'd be mad if I didn't go. The next morning, I woke up and tried to think of some lame excuse to tell Ella. I started to text her and say "Hey I can't make it tonight. Feeling sick..." but before I could even send it a message from her popped up. The message said, "Be there to pick u up at 7. Be ready for some fun!" I deleted the message and I was going to send and typed in "okay. I'll be ready" and sent it to her. I felt sick. I knew my nerves were kicking in because my palms were sweaty and my face was getting all red. She arrived with her parents, and I went to get in the car with her. Once we got to the haunted house, I knew it was now or never. I had to face my fears. I started to walk slowly and Ella grabbed my hand and sped me up a bit. I felt better knowing that all of my friends were with me. I went through the haunted house, and my friends and me all jumped at the same parts and especially the

weird clown part. Even Ella, who I thought wasn't afraid of anything, covered her eyes and ears at one point and I had to pull her along! It was scary, but I actually had fun.

Ultimately, I faced my fear and unexpectedly followed through with the haunted house. Although I was scared of the clowns, my friends didn't make fun of me, and I had a blast with them.